

Extra Info
06/04/07
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Maryjane Kenney

From: Andrew Magee
Sent: Monday, June 04, 2007 9:00 AM
To: Board of Selectmen
Subject: FW: Main Street Sidewalk Plans

FYI

From: Magee, Andy
Sent: Monday, June 04, 2007 8:47 AM
To: 'Edmund Starzec'; pberry@dwbboston.com; lsr57@comcast.net
Subject: RE: Main Street Sidewalk Plans

Ed:

First let me thank you for your input and concern.

I will be brief in order to preclude any violation of open meeting law, but invite you to call me directly (978-461-6248) or speak to me at our next CPC meeting.

This sidewalk has long been on the list of priority sidewalks and has no relation to the Quail Ridge project. Indeed, at our hearing Police Chief Widmayer identified this as his number one priority sidewalk in terms of public safety. The Selectmen voted to approve the project at the last Selectmen's meeting. As the sole dissenting vote I was asked to work with Bruce Stamski on improving what I saw as a serious safety issue at Post Office Square. In the meantime, the design is greatly driven by land ownership issues with the two principal property owners - Brewster Conant and the Acton Water District. I have had communication with both in an effort to identify any modifications that would be acceptable to them and that would lessen the visual impact. I will report on those discussions at this evening's Selectmen's meeting.

Again, thank you.

-Andy

From: Edmund Starzec [mailto:estarzec@verizon.net]
Sent: Sunday, June 03, 2007 6:10 PM
To: pberry@dwbboston.com; lsr57@comcast.net; Magee, Andy
Subject: Main Street Sidewalk Plans

Lauren, Peter, and Andy:

I am generally hesitant to insert myself into processes with which I am not directly involved but I can't help but notice the growing public concern with the level of tree cutting associated with the proposed Main Street sidewalk as well as frustration with the accompanying public process. While I saw the notice for the tree hearing on your agenda a few weeks ago, it was not until I read Susan Mitchell-Hardt's letter in this week's Beacon and spoke with some fellow members of the Design Review Board on Tuesday that I realized the magnitude of this action. I think it deserves a more open and thorough public process.

I have two main questions.

6/4/2007

1. Why is this sidewalk suddenly a time-critical priority in light of recent clamoring for sidewalks in Acton's more densely settled neighborhoods? This past year we all heard from residents of Prospect Street and other neighborhoods about the need for sidewalks in front of their homes. I believe the sidewalk priority list was expanded and resorted at some point to take these concerns into account. I don't believe this part of Main Street is even on the list. Could the funding be redirected to start one or more of these other projects? Rumor has it that the funding for the Main Street sidewalk project is mitigation from Quail Ridge (I have long since recycled the Planning Board decision and my memory fails me here) but given the town's unflagging willingness to accommodate Mr. Peabody's frequent procedural oversights over the last few years (Audobon certification, pre-construction water quality testing, failure to properly store chemicals, etc.) I would hope that he is not somehow preventing this mitigation funding from being used elsewhere.

2. Why don't we take the time to see if we can't improve the design? If it is important to move forward with the Main Street sidewalk, it seems clear that the current design could be improved to reduce the cutting of mature trees, thereby improving the pedestrian experience and reducing concerns about loss of Acton's remaining rural character. Taking a quick look at the plans, they seem optimized to maximize ease of construction. I think a sidewalk here could be a real benefit for the town but it needs to be carefully designed a la the great winding, undulating sidewalks we see in parts of Lincoln and Concord (and even along our own Pope Road!). Acton resident Tom Dolittle, a trained landscape architect and WalkBoston board member, has volunteered his services to help improve the plan. If this redesign would require additional funding, I would hope that there might be a creative way to fund it perhaps through the CPC.

From my own work, I know how frustrating delay for the sake of process can be and I don't mean to take away from the good work of staff. That said, if there is any way to reopen discussion on this topic in coming weeks, I think the public will benefit no matter what decision is reached.

Thanks,

Ed Starzec
